

Doing it for the kids: the role of sustainability in family consumption

Ritch, Elaine L.; Brownlie, Douglas

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Doing it for the kids: an exploratory study of the influence of sustainability on family consumption?

Abstract

Purpose: The paper explores social dynamics around clothing provisioning for families with young children and how involvement in environmental concerns shapes those dynamics and presents challenges and opportunities in terms of evolving consumption tastes. Through collecting and analysing narratives of mothering and provisioning, we explore the influence of children on mothers' decision-making in household provisioning; in particular, how family provisioning is impacted by the child's education into ideas of sustainability through the European initiative of Eco-schools.

Design: The exploratory research design specifically sought the demographic profile identified in extant literature as engaging with sustainability issues to explore how they were interpreted into familial consumption. This resulted in 28 depth interviews exploring a range of related topics with a group of working mothers with a professional occupation.

Findings: The study finds that family consumption behaviour is mediated by relations towards environmental concerns and taste positions taken by both parents and children. It illustrates how care for children's safety, social resilience and health and wellbeing is habitus informed as well as being the subject of wider institutional logics including educational interventions such as School Ecostatus and participation in mother and child activity groups. However, tensions arose surrounding the children's socialisation with peers and space was provided to help the children self-actualise. Informants responded to perceived uncertainty around sustainability and clothing by drawing comparisons between contexts of food and clothing provisioning.

Research limitations: The exploratory goal of the in-depth study limited the scope of its empirical work to a small group of participants sharing consumer characteristics and geographical location.

Practical implications: The research provides ideas for retailers, brands and marketers to better position their product offering as it relates to growing family concerns for ecological issues and sustainable consumption, as well as what motivates sustainable behaviours, from both the child and mothers perspective.

Social implications: The research identifies the immersion of sustainability within family households when there are no financial implications, influenced through campaigns, schools and society. This provides examples of what motivates sustainable behaviours for retailers and marketers to develop strategies that can be capitalised on.

Originality/value: the originality of the research emerges through examining how children influence sustainability within households and decision-making, moving beyond health implications to educate children to be responsible consumers through play and authentic experiences.

Keywords: family consumption; socialisation; sustainability; children; education, concerned parenting, authenticity

Article classification: research paper

Introduction

The influence of children upon family consumption is said to be increasing (Boulay et al., 2014; de Faultrier et al., 2014); and retailers and marketers position products and merchandising activity to appeal to a spectrum of tastes, including those of cause-related issues such as sustainability. Children impact upon consumption decisions both directly, through spending money gifted to them by adults, and indirectly as products and services provide provisioning for the child (de Faultrier et al., 2014). The power of indirect influence is particularly notable in the food sector, where 'promotional' mascots and anthropomorphic characters are used on brand packaging to encourage children to 'pester' their parents directly to choose one brand over another (Wilson and Wood, 2004). Similarly, the presence of children in the household indirectly impacts on decision-making and choice selection; for example organic food has been identified as a popular choice for mothers when weaning (Grønhøj, 2006). This preference has resulted in the growth of organic food brands, such as Organix and Ella's Kitchen, which are available in mainstream supermarkets. Both of these concepts situate the needs of the child at the centre of parental decision-making: one inviting children to contribute actively to family consumption choices; and the other to ensure that the food purchased for children by parents will benefit their health and well-being. However, little is known of the role of which sustainability plays in shaping family consumption, or if children use sustainable concepts to position their requests and influence parental consumption choice.

Academic research notes discourse around organic food and green mothering (Cairns et al., 2013). This emerges from two positions surrounding the security of the child's wellbeing: the birth of a child raises concerns for the wider implications of consumption and its impact on future environmental security (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000); and organic food appeals around 'safety' speak to parental concerns for the provenance and purity of food to be ingested by the child (Cairns et al., 2013; Grønhøj, 2006). Both relate directly to environmental sustainability and wider economic and societal development that '*meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*', (WCED, 1987). The ethos of sustainability is an increasingly important message circulating across a wide range social activity as consumption becomes seen as the prime site within which people contribute to global environmental degradation and social inequality (Stern, 2006). Within consumption practice, sustainable behaviours include purchasing products that are produced with declared respect for the environment and workers, and implementing principles of reducing consumption, re-using commodities to extend the lifespan and recycling waste.

Consumers in the EU are encouraged to participate in a triangle of change alongside government and business initiatives, through adopting sustainable behaviours in the home (Ritch et al., 2009). Increasingly retailers and producers are recognising the currency of 'sustainability messages' to

attract consumers (Weise et al., 2012). Empirical studies examining consumption within familial relations of childcare, especially as a generative site for the shaping of consumption tastes, leave a gap in our understanding 'sustainability' as a taste influencer (Carey et al., 2008). We argue that the fashion industry and its distribution channels invite similar critical concerns to the food industry particularly regarding the positioning of inexpensive clothing that is said to be the result of: exploitative practice of both the environment and workers; chemical applications that reside in clothing and can be absorbed by the skin and cause illness; and encouraging increased consumption of inferior quality clothing that is destined for landfill. We argue that expanding our understanding of how the texture of familial relations towards concepts of sustainability can help retailers and marketers to better focus on appeals that recognise that spectrum of influence on tastes and decisions around the consumption of clothing.

The purpose of this paper is to contextualise the connection between sustainability and clothing provisioning for the family through examining intergenerational dynamic between mothers, children and household provisioning through the mothers' experience. We argue that little is known about how garment sustainability is integrated within familial behaviours and how sustainability is located within notions of family life. Yet understanding this within the familial dynamic is important to progressing societal equity, particularly as this includes changing behaviours and consumption practice of future generations (de Faultrier et al., 2014). We focus on the greening of mothering practice, exploring provisioning behaviour with regard to both food and clothing purchasing for young children. We compare and contrast mothering experiences of market responses in both sectors as they inform and influence provisioning. We claim that this is an area currently underdeveloped in the literature and we examine the issues through narratives describing sustainable concepts in relation to both food and fashion provisioning; therefore, the aim of this paper is to draw upon these findings and:

- identify the role sustainability plays within the context of family
- explore the socialisation of sustainable behaviours within social systems that are framed within family consumption (Kerrane et al., 2012)
- locate nuances of sustainable provisioning and child well-being as contributing to the mothering role (Cairns et al., 2013; Hamilton and Catterall, 2010)

Epp and Price (2008) suggest that a fluid framework is required to capture the emotional capital of caring for children, particularly the role of mothering which is often concurrent with notions of sacrifice to prioritise children's well-being. They postulate that to reveal the '*ebb and flow*' of family lifeworlds, space must be allowed to enable what they refer to as '*family identity enactments*', communicative performances from which everyday practices are experienced (p.50). Emerging from these frameworks, this paper presents the findings of a study of professional working mothers as they negotiate fashion consumption experiences with their children. The informants were working mothers with young children and their narratives present opportunities to explore rich and broad theoretical contributions to retail and distribution management, progressing not only familial decision-making, but also the sustainable agenda. This link between children influencing, directly and indirectly, sustainable practices in households has yet to be reported in the literature and we develop this link through introducing public initiatives undertaken to socialise children into 'environmental awareness' at the level of primary education. We also clarify that children are

represented in this study only at the level of mothering provisioning practices towards the expressed needs of her children.

This rest of the paper is structured as follows: firstly the literature review will examine family consumption through a dual lenses of sustainability and concerned parenting, both of which are underpinned by social systems. This is followed by establishing the methodology, and subsequently the findings and discussion. The paper concludes with the implications for industry, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Literature review

The socialisation of children within the cultural forms generated by consumption activity begins from early years (Ironica, 2012; Cook, 2009), as children observe the products, brands and retailers their parents engage with (Boulay et al., 2014) and this extends to related familial behaviours. Social systems that influence consumption rituals are often generationally bound, inflicting tensions between parents and children due to contrasting agendas (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013). Parents are influenced by a number of factors, including finances, convenience and meeting the child's needs and wants. Children are motivated primarily by emotive features, such as celebrity endorsement and peer-group socialisation (Pole, et al., 2006). The next section considers how social environment shapes relations of sustainability.

Sustainability infusing through social-systems

Encouragement to invest in sustainable behaviour is filtering through campaigns from the government and businesses. For example, the EU sets the UK government with recycling targets that filter to local authorities (Recycling Guide, 2015) who lead with campaigns and facilities to encourage consumers to adopt sustainable behaviours. In Scotland this involvement extends to schools implementing sustainable education initiatives within the national curriculum to attain the international award of Eco-School status (FEE, ND) and enable children to introduce sustainable behaviours in the home. The educational goals of the Eco-School initiative are to ensure that schools quantify the impact of practices, such as waste sent to landfill, paper consumption, electricity usage and recycling facilities, before drawing up an action plan that includes pupils contributing through curriculum work and establishing an eco-school committee that will reach out to the wider community. After implementing an eco-code mission and addressing the main objectives that enable recognition of eco-school status, schools are awarded the green flag; however, continuous improvement is required for attainment of this award (FEE, ND). Within the retail sector, the dominant supermarkets in the UK compete with green credentials (Yates, 2009), through: increasing the number of sustainably produced commodities; encouraging consumers to re-use plastic bags (prior to implementing a charge in Scotland); and providing recycling facilities. Consequently, sustainability is infusing through a number of social systems that prompt consumers of their responsibility for good citizenship.

However, ethical researchers consider sustainability as class based. Organic produce is often more expensive and price is considered a barrier of accessing sustainably produced goods (Yates, 2009), and 'green mothering' is positioned as middle-class (Cairns et al, 2014). Griskevicius et al. (2010) found that sustainable consumption behaviours were linked to status and wealth, which they refer to as '*conspicuous conservation*'. This develops Veblen's (2005) notion that consumption is indicative

of class distinction and social identity, intertwined within a cultural code. Moving towards consumption that is conspicuously pro-social, as opposed to pro-self, transcends status and wealth to include moral value (Griskevicius et al., 2010). This suggests that consumers perceive their consumption behaviours as representative of the social, cultural and moral capital of the family's status and this research seeks to understand how this is experienced within familial lifeworlds.

Identity and status driven consumption

It is not only sustainability that is indicative of social status. Thomsen and Sørensen (2006) explored decision-making as signalling identity construction, suggesting that consumption behaviours are an emotive response within public spheres which are illustrate a mothers worth. This includes the child centeredness of the mothering role which focuses activities on the well-being of the child as an expressive symbol of their love, affection and care (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013; Hamilton and Catterall, 2010; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). Such familial rituals are constructed through the influence of family and friends and indicate membership to reference groups. This often occurs within institutional settings, such as mother and child groups, which constitute a public arena for identity politics supported by commodities (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013). To this end, commodities signal identity, both publically by conforming to stereo-typical consumption behaviours that represent good parenting and privately through expressing ideographic nuances of provisioning (Thomson, 1996). This paper argues that sustainability plays a role in indicating responsible citizenship, situated as a branch of good parenting that links with the concerned parenting literature.

The concerned parent symbolises the nature of responsibility towards child focused provisioning through commodities that indicate care-giving and protection (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013; Cook, 2009). Capitalising on consumption choice as the locus of concerned parenting, the retail sector has increased products orientated to appeal through educational and safety features, which are also positioned to reflect values and class (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013). In terms of safety, this develops notions around good and competent parenting whereby consumption does not only meet basic provisioning needs (Cook, 2009), but has additional attributes that enhance the child's well-being, health or includes activities that encourage learning through play (Ironica, 2012). Enhancing children's experiences through educational activities has also been adopted by marketers, to increase families' visits to a retailer, engage children with brands and build upon loyalty (Feenstra et al., 2015). The appeal to concerned parenting is the learning focus, as children are educated through play and this stimulates an emotional and active experience that aids children's cognitive and social development (Feenstra et al., 2015; Ironica, 2012).

Although educational play appeals to both parent and child, other consumption rituals may be conflicted. Often the child's needs and wants move beyond what is required, to luxuries that satisfy tastes and desires (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013). de Faultrier et al. (2014) suggest children are actively involved in family decision-making but their interest heightens when they have a specific consumption agenda; they provide the following example: in 2008 children had a 95 per cent influence on the clothing purchased for them, having grown from 39.7 per cent (initiated by the child) and 32.4 per cent (joint decision with parents) in 1998. This illustrates a change in family dynamics; another progression includes how children are not only socialised by observing the brands, retailers and behaviours that their parents engage with (Boulay et al., 2014), but develop skills built on understanding how best to appeal to their parents' values (Kerrane et al., 2012; Shaw, Hughner and Kurp Maher, 2006). Kerrane and Hogg (2012) found this was framed within an

intergenerational approach and co-shaped by siblings, where they worked together to coax consumption that addressed the social appeals of their parents, as well as satisfying the child's desires.

Social appeals and concerned parenting are representative of the heightened emotive relationship between a parent and child which transcends to induce a myriad of contradictory feelings. Carrigan and Szmigin (2006) and Thomson (1996) found working mothers experience chaotic lifeworlds, juggling the competing demands of work and home responsibilities. Parents increasingly pressured within their everyday lives experience guilt through their inability to spend social time with their children. Although concerned parenting is underpinned by authentic familial experiences, rather than commerciality (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013), other research has found consumption plays a role in alleviating guilt (UNICEF, 2011; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Thomson, 1996). This research seeks to identify how conflicting emotions of the moral economy and consumption, propelled through feelings of love to satisfy children's needs and wants, are reconciled (Hamilton and Catterall, 2010).

The above literature illustrates the familial dynamic is complex and can be viewed as a consumption unit consisting of contrasting agendas (Hamilton and Catterall, 2010). This suggests that decisionmaking is an interplay of competing desires from various family members, therefore conflict minimisation involves compromise (Commuri and Gentry, 2000). Combining sustainable principles with decision-making may add further complexity, and it is this latter concept of integrating sustainability into everyday lifeworlds that is focal to this research. Sustainable calls for consumers to consider the implications of production on workers and the environment along with waste through reducing consumption, re-using commodities and recycling may not be appropriate in the family setting, particularly when children necessitate increased consumption with financial implications that may not be convenient to implement. The next section will establish the research methods deemed appropriate to explore how sustainability is interpreted within familial decisionmaking.

Methodology

The paper reports the findings of a study of family context and the expression of 'sustainability' as manifest through consumption tastes, focusing on mothers' experience. It builds upon previous studies of food consumption and childcare as shaped by environmental interests and involvement, building upon informant narratives which often sought to illustrate issues through drawing comparisons between issues of clothing provisioning and those of food provisioning. The paper takes familial consumption choices around the provisioning of children's clothing as a setting within which to explore the influence of taste mediators, in this case a range of issues relating to ecological concerns and clothing production. Although the debate surrounding which demographic characteristics are specifically related to sustainable behaviour remains inconclusive (Bray et al., 2011), it does suggest that awareness of and involvement in ecological affairs is shaped by habitus through class, occupation and educational status. Building upon this insight, we explore the family dynamics around children's clothing provisioning through recruiting 28 professional middle class mothers with young children. As this consumer profile has been identified as implementing sustainable options within the context of food consumption, for both health reasons (Cairns et al, 2014) and as conspicuously illustrating concerned parenting (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013), it was considered prudent to examine if similar concerns transferred to other consumption contexts, such

as fashion. In this way the present study captures and represents the voices of those who are said to be already engaging with sustainable consumption in the context of food provisioning and that this suggests they may already be predisposed towards involvement in similar concerns relating to clothing provisioning. This approach of building upon what is already known of the characteristics specific to the phenomenon is typical of interpretative research (Smith et al., 2009) and two characteristics were found to be prominent in consumers adopting sustainable behaviours: mothers and higher levels of education, as presented in Table 1 below:

Insert Table 1 here

Table 1: Characteristics of consumers found to be more engaged with sustainability

As the research sought to capture narratives of how sustainability is enacted within the family setting it was important to ensure that the informant was the sole gatekeeper to the child's consumption and the sample was narrowed to solely include working mothers with children who were either in pre-school nursery care or in primary school (aged up to 11 years), whereas older children would have more autonomy. Previous research (Boulay et al., 2014) agrees that children over the age of 12 years who are in secondary education tend to be more independent in their consumption choices. To align with this specific sampling requirement, purposive sampling identified five potential participants who were asked to recommend five further participants each, and this snowball effect ensured that similar networks and lifeworlds could inform the study. The demographic profiles of the participants are displayed in Table two below:

Unstructured in-depth interviews provided the opportunity to examine the meaning (for example, feeling, knowing, thinking, remembering) applied to consumption behaviours, as encapsulated within socially constructed lifeworlds (Thomson et al., 1989). The participants were asked to describe how they selected and purchased fashion for themselves and their children. Sustainability was introduced through presenting garment labels as primers, which provided a vehicle for discussion (Thomson and Hytko, 1997) and indicated sustainable concepts, such as organic cotton or information on the garment-workers'. Analysis of the narratives identified practices and tensions around satisfying the children's clothing needs and wants within the practical restraints of familial provisioning; the interplay of sustainability relating to concerned parenting and constructing family identity derived directly from the data, thus providing a unique perspective. The interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify commonalties in approach and behaviours. The next section will describe three themes that illustrate how sustainability contributes to familial provisioning that were constructed around of the family's identity and status of concerned parenting.

Insert Table 2 here

Table 2: Demographic profile

Insert Figure 1 here

Figure 1: Two of the garment-labels presented to the participants to illicit discussion around sustainability in the context of fashion

Findings and discussion

The findings presented illustrate the nuances experienced through the inclusion of sustainability within the family dynamic. Underpinning familial consumption choice was the focus upon the children's well-being and the practical accomplishment of related nurturing skills. Consideration of 'sustainability' was produced within two broad behavioural domains: first, discharging the role of the 'concerned parent' through ensuring the provision of nutritious food, bringing additional health properties to children, while raising awareness of environmental issues capable of signalling virtue in parenting and childcare; and second, generating resources that strengthened the child's social resilience through ensuring that children's autonomy and expressiveness was not compromised, particularly through the purchase of fashion related commodities.

Although the aim of the research originated from considering sustainability from the context of fashion consumption, once presented with the labels describing sustainable concepts the informants veered towards examples that illustrated wider involvement in sustainability around both food and clothing. This could be a result of more information within the public domain that informs consumers of sustainable implications of food production and consumption, as well as recycling. Participants displayed confidence in the discussing the details of sustainable food production and consumption, including acceptable post-ownership and disposal behaviour. Contrastingly, awareness of environmental issues was much more limited in the context of clothing production and consumption; and although informants acknowledged allegations of exploitation that implicated the fashion industry, it was also felt that the exact details of related practices were difficult to ascertain, especially when many occur overseas. Participating mothers were generally of the view that their children's needs and wants were existentially experienced and of immediate consequence, evoking an emotive response that typically preceded choice negotiations. Therefore, the findings presented below focus on the idiographic practice of selecting clothing fashion for the family to explore the nuance of aligning consumption with moral values and how this related to sustainability.

Sustainability underpinning family enactments

Consistent with the literature, organic food was selected when it was available, a practice that begins for informants during weaning as illustrated by the following extracts:

'Particularly since having [my daughter] when there's a choice [in the supermarket], I almost always get organic' (P-23)

'Certainly, when they were babies they had organic everything. I buy quite a lot of organic fruit and veg still' (P-11).

Although indicating a preference for organic food, particularly during weaning, the price premium association with such choices meant that higher pricing was often prohibitive (Yates, 2009) and idiographic constructs were applied depending on the produce. For example, some only bought organic milk or meat, others only fruit or vegetables depending on whether the skin was eaten or whether it was grown underground or above. It was not only the omission of pesticides that was appealing, notions of going back to nature also applied, especially as some of the organic vegetables delivered from farms included unwashed carrots, a novel experience that typically delighted children. This provided opportunities to discuss the origins of food within the family context. It also

inspired some participants involve children in the growing of fruit and vegetables in the garden, turning the activity into play:

We dug a vegetable garden and we grow our own potatoes and vegetables. I sound like I am someone from the 'Good Life' (A BBC programme from the 1970s) I am not at all [laughing]. The only reason we are doing it is because of the kids. (P-25)

P-25 jokes that she adopted a comfortable rural lifestyle. However, underpinning the activity are practical and social aspects. She expressed that she found the purchase of organic food expensive, especially as the children's appetite increased; growing food as a family reduced the financial strain, as well as educating the children of food production through play. It is important to note that she expresses that growing vegetables was inspired by becoming a parent; she also explained that the family cycled rather than drove on family trips as she wanted her children to experience sustainable behaviours that were healthier and could extend into adulthood. The mothering role had reoriented her behaviours, which were no longer insular but emotionally driven through the desire to protect and nurture the child with enriching experiences that construct family identity enactments. Within this are notions of play, education and provisioning which are underpinned by a class-based habitus of the concerned parent (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013; Ironica, 2012), as well as wider notions of environmental citizenship. This illustrates that messages of how to adopt sustainable behaviours are filtering through social systems and beginning to impact on family life, grounded within authentic experiences. However, sustainable preferences did not extend to organic clothing and textiles for many of the participants, due to their assumption that this would incur greater pricing increments and this option was not readily available on the high street where their fashion consumption occurred.

Participants revealed that sustainable activities, practices and beliefs were discussed within peer group settings, such as mother and toddler groups, where behaviours were influenced and renegotiated (Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). Brusdal and Frønes (2013) believe that public spaces designed to bring parents and children together encourage parental discourse where cultural codes establish '*not only economic and cultural capital; it signs moral capital to the most important reference group; the peer group of parents*' (p 162). Narratives shared by participants acknowledged social influence derived from practices of collective discourse trickling down from parenting literature to adaptation within rituals of familial identity embedded within consumption (Thomson, 1996). Peer relationships among parents offered an opportunity to share lifeworld stories and experiences, within which practices were endorsed and contested. This included a consensus of organic food preferences to avoid items deemed unhealthy, such as food with additives. Individual constructs were strengthened through sharing views on the moral economy and their commitment to mothering; however this discourse did not extend to concerns for issues of ecology in the production of garments where chemical applications are made to textiles.

Another way in which mothering discourse manifested was through the wide adoption of a Nestlé boycott and this also seemed like a social movement, as explained by P-28:

Sometimes we talk about things socially. Women sit and they talk about different things, sharing what our thoughts are and somebody says something. [For example], I don't buy Nestlé. (P-28)

P-28 explains how the women share ideas, lifeworld stories and experiences within mothering groups. In return the participants received support, which was constructed and endorsed through shared perceptions of good mothering behaviours, underpinned by locating provisioning as expressive of the family's values and symbolic of concerned parenting (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013). The importance placed upon belonging to a child-focused collective which represented concerned parenting heightened the strength of feeling for most of the participants to avoid Nestlé products. Although the origins of this boycott were due to marketing activities that left babies in developing countries malnourished (NCT, 2012), not all participants were clear on this - perhaps a reflection that attempting discussions with children present are often fraught by a child seeking attention. Nevertheless, motivation of the Nestlé boycott originated in discussions within social networks which focus on child well-being, extending from concern for their own children's health, to empathy for children who are malnourished from Nestlé's marketing activities. The inclusion of the moral economy also indicates class, status and wealth through '*conspicuous conservation*' (Griskevicius et al., 2010) where social identity is influenced through cultural codes that indicate membership within peer groups (Veblen, 2005). Thus boycotting manifests as a social moral act which led to an emotive response, propelled by contrasting their own children's well-being and concluding that the mothering role was ultimately as a protective care-giver where the children's needs are prioritised (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013; Hamilton and Catterall, 2010; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006). Prior to discussing how sustainability was suspended to focus on the child's socialisation needs, the research will consider how sustainable production provided opportunities to educate children on the wider societal issues of consumption behaviours.

Sustainability as an educational tool

As argued above, sustainably produced food contributed to perceptions of good parenting through embracing notions of virtue and pre-eminence, which consequently influenced family consumption behaviours and expanded to include educating the children of the origin of food. Educating the children was also notable through recycling activities and the concept of Fairtrade production. Recycling waste had become an established behaviour in the participants' lifeworlds, due to the tangibility of understanding how the household contributed to the wider sustainable agenda. Additionally, the ease of participating in recycling activities was supported by the local authority and food retailers (Recycling Guide, 2015; Yates, 2009). Selected quotes illustrating the commonality of recycling are presented below:

I have always recycled, but even more now. With absolutely everything and I notice that our bin is virtually empty now [laughing]. (P-25)

It's amazing how the difference in the last few years. I have been recycling since it was introduced but before that you just chucked everything in the bin. The kids are really aware of it as well. They always put their stuff in the compost bin and they know where the cardboard goes and things. They have learned from an early age, they know that rubbish is not just rubbish. (P-15)

Those extracts illustrate that encouragement through social systems was filtering into household rituals and that recycling behaviours that prevented household waste from landfill were a source of pride, as well as a shared behaviour in the family. The children were very much involved in sorting for recycling and often it was their contribution to household chores. Recycling was both a visible

behaviour through putting recycling at the kerbside and participation had no financial implications, reducing the traditional barrier to sustainable behaviours of price (Yates, 2009). Participating in progressing the sustainable agenda illustrated that the family's behaviours were pro-social, something which was part of their social identity (Griskevicius et al., 2010); some participants made scathing remarks about others failure to contribute taking the time to re-orientate waste from landfill. For example, P-17 stated *'We recycle. I don't know why you wouldn't, it's really not that hard'*, while P-16 expressed a similar view: *'sometimes people can just be very lazy, quite often after weekends I can hear the bottles in our bin and I'm like, why don't they recycle? There is no excuse for not doing it'*. The quotes illustrate the immersion into everyday practice as well as non-compliance implicating anti-social behaviour. The desire to recycle was dually influenced, from parents and children, as explained below:

I'm really impressed that the message that, the kids get at school. My son had a jumper and it had a hole in it. I think he thought I was going to put it in the bin, because I put it down on the floor beside the bin. He said, mum you can't do that, that's got to be recycled, which of course I would have done. So my kids are really, clear about the message. I think that that's actually a two-way thing, partly from the school and partly from us, because we do take that very seriously. (P-25)

This extract suggests how children can actively contribute to household provisioning decisions, with behaviours normalised through the joint message of home and school. As such, the recycling was considered as educational play as the children were socialised in recycling behaviours, identifying and aligning materials with the respective bins. Both Boulay et al. (2014) and de Faultrier et al. (2014) recommend the insertion of playfulness and fun in consumption related activities for children, engaging through active, tactile and emotional senses (Feenstra et al., 2015). Thus, the agendas of all household members are unified as the household integrated pro-social behaviours that reflect the mainstreaming of social values, particularly those without financial implications. This progressive reinforcement was also prevalent with the concept of Fairtrade, through positive positioning not only within school, but also from social organisations, such as Scouts and Woodcraft Folk. P-12 describes how her son was introduced to the concept of Fairtrade:

At Beavers last year it was a Fairtrade night. They all sat in a circle and we started with twenty single pennies. Everyone was given a part, the grower, the person that captained the ship or worked in the supermarket. It was the full cycle. The beavers had to guess how much the grower got of the twenty pennies for the banana. It was something like one or two pence to start with and Tesco at the end got something phenomenal. They were all like, oh that's not fair. The grower, he's taken all the risk, but this is all he gets. Then we all had a chat about Fairtrade and then we redistributed all the pennies and allocated it a bit more on risk. The grower got an awful lot more and it was all distributed a lot more evenly. So, really it was a really good message for them [and now my son] associates that that Fairtrade symbol with products where the person that made it gets a better deal. (P-12)

P-12 describes her pride in how the children recognised that certain negotiations were inequitable and that the children were socialised to positively consider Fairtrade production within the decisionmaking process. Boulay et al. (2014) also identify that children respond to activities that are positioned as fun, which can manifest as impulsive requests when shopping. Through introducing children to sustainable concepts through playful activities, it has captured their imagination and

appealed to their sense of 'fairness'. This was also evident when P-12 explained how her daughter had received a gift of a dress from relatives in Africa which had photos and life-stories of the women who had made that garment. P-12 read the information to her daughter and they talked about the women, building a narrative around the photos. Engaging with the children through storytelling ignites an imaginative re-enactment of the production process that resonates the child's imagination. This potentially will contribute to deep rooted values that will redefine consumption behaviours. It may make future consumers more questioning of production practice and savvy to market structures, particularly as de Faultrier et al. (2014) situate children as technologically savvy and they may be more proficient at investigating allegations by NGOs of worker exploitation and sceptical of brands efforts to refute them. The prevalence of social media to share information within peer groups may mean that children become disenchanted with marketing activities (Boulay et al., 2014) and begin to question whether the brand is representative of the values they deem as more important, underpinned by notions of 'fairness' shaped through storytelling activities in their formative years.

There was also evidence of using family values to make consumption requests. Previous research found that children influence household consumption choices through understanding the family's values to position their requests positively (Kerrane et al., 2012; Shaw Hughner and Kurp Maher, 2006). However, evidence from this study suggests that children's participation in consumption decision extends beyond the mere expressing of needs and wants to the manipulation of familial tastes as framed by concerns for sustainability commitments. Participants expressed pride in their children's growing sense of social awareness and found themselves 'pestered' in the supermarket to select the Fairtrade option. For some, this had progressed to positioning requests through appealing to their parents' sustainable leanings. For example, P-22 was amused that her children used Fairtrade status to propagandise and manipulate the consumption of desired goods:

They are very aware of Fairtrade, and, those kinds of labels. In fact they will say to me [laughing] that's Fairtrade mum [laughing]! So they will use that as a way to cajole me into getting something. (I-22)

P-22 went on to explain how her older children used Fairtrade or organic to position higher priced consumption requests positively, including designer fashion labels, to appeal to her social values.

This illustrates that sustainability was strategically utilised to increase the likelihood of the purchase through appealing to their parent's social awareness and social position. Tension has been found to arise when the children's desires conflict with their parent's agenda (Hamilton and Catterall, 2010); through positioning the moral economy as justification for consumption, children are using both guilt and virtuousness to obtain their preferred outcome (de Faultrier et al., 2014). Guber and Berry (1993) advise that children's influence on household consumption has provided opportunities for products and services with potential solutions. Similarly, children's observations of their family environment were considered by Kerrane et al. (2012) as pivotal in the socialisation of framing consumption. Therefore, requests were manipulated to align with the families philosophy to increase the likelihood of a positive parental response (Kerrane and Hogg, 2012; Cook, 2009), although previous studies have not identified an ethical or sustainable motive.

Alleviating tensions

Nevertheless, conflict was experienced through the demands of familial provisioning. The centrality of the participants' focus upon the mothering role to ensure the child's well-being was not restricted to food and nourishment, but extended to the child's sense of self and socialisation discourse in which fashion played a pivotal role. Despite recognition that some facets of consumption contributed to planned obsolescence, the children necessitated continuous consumption because of physical and social growth (Hamilton and Catterall, 2010). The informants described tensions between the children's request for luxuries that satisfy tastes and desires (Brusdal and Frønes, 2013) which were deemed unnecessary, especially when they were allegedly produced under exploitative practice. They were aware that the children's socialisation encouraged increased consumption, such as clothing or technology, to maintain popular fashion trends (Pole et al., 2006). Although the participants attempted to guide their children through educating them upon the wider implications of consumption, they were also aware that this contrasted against societal norms and managing the child's desires and expectations was a careful balance, as considered by P-22:

We are members of woodcraft folk, so we talk about Fairtrade and those kind of things quite a lot. They talk about it at school as well. There is a high level of awareness amongst the young people that I know of, [including] child labour and that relationship to the fashion industry. The additional pressure comes from me, definitely. They are [aware of a] difference [between] them and their friends. I would be seen as a bit odd for making a big issue of it, where some other mum might say let's have a trip to Glasgow and go to Primark. (P-22)

P-22 introduced the disparity between the moral economy and the social acceptance of inexpensive clothing that is allegedly derived from exploitative practice of both workers and the environment. She acknowledges the emergence of tensions between her own beliefs and values and that of her children, where she does not want to transpose their feelings or make them feel different from their peers through what she describes as 'odd' behaviours. Another example of this was offered by P-19, who described that her son's football club provided a new uniform annually. P-19 felt socially pressured to purchase this, even though it was not required by her son's growth. She protested at the excessiveness of an annual uniform, from both perspectives in that she had to pay for the uniform and that consumption without need increases demand upon the 'earth's resources'. She recalled that the majority of parents simply 'handed over money without question' which made her feel like 'a lone voice'. Further, her son felt alienated, as he wanted the new uniform to fit in with the other children. Although P-19 attempted to explain to her five-year-old son the environmental consequences of production, it was a difficult concept for him to understand, particularly as his personal experience was feeling different to the other children in the team. Contrasting values were also experienced by P-4, who had previously been vegan and adopted voluntary simplicity. She described her approach in the following quote:

We buy more things that I just really wish had never existed and had certainly never come into our house. Having children, you are brought into a world that is changing at a faster pace. You don't want them to be different. We have different values to a lot of people. We didn't have a car until recently, we just had a tiny little telly, we didn't have, the sort of material things. And when [our son] went to school, we became aware that he may come home and say so and so has got this. [We did not want our] children [to] feel that they are different, even if you whole heartedly believe that your values are what count. I have seen

children of parents who are [ethical hardliners] and their children can just be a bit weird and socially outcast. So, I think we have had to temper ourselves. That's one of the differences with having children, you have to live in the world that they share. (P-4)

P-4 felt able to manage her consumption; she was aware that her reflective trajectory had selfactualised in that she no longer required consumer commodities to define her sense of self; her behaviours and values were indicative of her identity formation. Yet she did not want to transpose her moral perspective onto her children, aware that they had to negotiate their sense of self within society. This is notable in expressing that her lifeworld was juxtaposed within a '*world that they share*', sacrificing her moral sentiment to allow their children to socialise. The narratives support assertions that children have more autonomy in consumption (de Faultrier et al., 2014), but also that behaviours that contrast with ideology, class distinction or social identity will not necessarily manifest in feelings of guilt due to the focus on the child's well-being taking precedence. Rather it was an acceptance that socialising children with notions of sustainability reflects an ongoing process of developing the child's values alongside their sense of self as they mature.

Conclusion and managerial implications

The study reveals that aspects of sustainability are infusing into household behaviours for this consumer profile, encouraged by facilities provided by the public and private sectors (Ritch et al., 2009). This has manifested through consumption behaviours that are positioned as being less detrimental to the environment (organic) and workers involved in production (Fairtrade) through reflecting upon the origins of commodities, as well as recycling activities that dispose of waste responsibly. However, this approach was primarily focused on food consumption due to availability in mainstream supermarkets and pricing that was still affordable. Although this is currently less prominent for fashion consumption, the research also points to the infiltration of sustainable concepts into familial behaviours, influencing practices that are embedded from campaigns and information within social settings, such as schools, retailers and government intervention. It is important to note that the sample were both educated and mothers, criteria that had previously been identified as encouraging sustainable consumption within the context of food; however, the findings still revealed that price was still a consideration and the household budget had to be managed carefully. Further, despite exhibiting knowledge of the benefits, both for the family and broader context, of sustainable food, this did not transfer to other consumption contexts, particularly fashion. This was due to complexity of the issues, for example although there are allegations of garment-worker and environmental exploitation, fashion retailers refute this and focus on other marketing criteria. For example, popular children's fashion retailers and supermarkets that sell children's fashion focus on price. Therefore, this research helps to explain the attitude-behaviour gap that is prevalent in ethical research (Boulstridge, and Carrigan, 2000). Moreover, this research has provided examples of how the desire to act sustainably can be reinforced and restricted by the children's influence. As such, children can play an active role in developing everyday sustainable practice, bringing information from school as an authority for change. Therefore, the research develops understanding of how children engage and make sense of the world around them, such as the influence from peers and information provided through education, providing opportunities for marketing and retail (Cook, 2009). The narratives also illustrate that the mothers are engaging with the children to present the notions of sustainability and encourage consideration of wider implications which supports the children's socialisation of consumption behaviours. This was

positioned as educating the children with the wider implications of consumption practice (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) and citizenship through practices of play and storytelling. This supports the work of sustainability groups who seek to indoctrinate behaviours that will enable future generations to meet their consumption needs (WCED, 1987). Finally, the research indicates that children have a growing awareness of sustainability and their mother's preferences for sustainably produced commodities and are using this to enhance the outcome of their consumption requests. This expands the range of criteria used as 'pestering' for requests, bourn out of appealing to the mothers preferences to be seen to conspicuously pro-social (Griskevicius et al., 2010). As such, the study contributes to deepening understanding of the role of sustainability in familial behaviours, which is not restricted to provisioning, but used to educate through emotional links and stimulating activities, encouraging citizenship and to positively pester consumption desired by children.

Practical implications

Retailers can capitalise on appealing to mothers and children through educational activities that respond to themes of sustainability, including information and visual imagery on the workers, the culture of the country of origin and how the consumption act supports communities in developing countries. This could extend to games and activities that move beyond the packaging to an online environment where the children can learn more through interactive tools. Additionally, brands have opportunities through working with educators who seek eco-school status with supported projects that benefit those who live in poverty. Children are not only future consumers (de Faultrier et al., 2014), but will also inherit the planet and may need to implement change to meet the needs of an ever growing global population (Stern, 2006: WCED, 1987). The main benefit of educating children of the detrimental consequences and challenges of production is that as they will be better informed to make positive change. Retailers must engage in the provision of social environmental resources.

Limitations and future research

The research is limited by its size and exploratory scope, which was necessary for a deeper exploration but it does not allow for generalisability. Future study would benefit from extending the framework of the research to a larger and more diverse habitus within a wider geographical spectrum as well as a broader demographic profile, such as mothers who do not work in professional occupations or to explore if sustainable awareness is experienced in a similar way by fathers. Lastly, it would be an interesting approach to explore how children interpret sustainable concepts, such as recycling, Fairtrade and eco-market structures, and how this can be infused into education play. This would benefit a number of agencies, such as providing methods for schools and organisations like Scout and Guide movements to deliver related activities; it would also help retail, brand and marketing managers understand what delivery children understand and respond to, resulting in a better focus of intermediary activities.

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